E. 11. 5

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE QUEEN AT White-Hall,

February the Fifteenth, 169$\frac{0}{1}$.

By *HENRY DOVE*, D.D.
Chaplain to Their Majesties.

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944:90

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Pſal. 18. 23.

And I kept my ſelf from mine Iniquity.

THis Pſalm contains a general Thankſgiving, which *David* made unto God, after he had delivered him from his Potent Enemies, but eſpecially, from the hand of *Saul*, who was the moſt furious and implacable of all his Adverſaries: And here, as he aſcribes his Deliverance wholly to the Divine Goodneſs, ſo he comforts him-

ſelf in his Innocency and Integrity, and aſcribes that alſo to GOD's reſtraining and aſſiſting Grace, which kept him back from that Iniquity to which he was ſtrongly tempted, and did not ſuffer him to do as the wicked would have done in the like Caſe.

What that particular Caſe and Sin was, is not here mention'd; but if we conſult the Hiſtory of his Life, it ſeems to referr to that known Inſtance, when *Saul* fell into his hands at *Engedi*; ſo that he could as eaſily have ſlain him, as he cut off the Skirt of his Garment; and yet he would not do ſuch an Unlawful and Wicked Act, no not to ſave his Life; and he gives the Reaſon in the Words before my Text; *For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his Judgments were before me, and I did not put away his Statutes from me.* As though he had ſaid, I had more regard to God's Righteous Laws, than to my private Intereſt, and when I had a fair Opportunity of putting an end to all my Troubles, I choſe rather to ſuffer, than to do evil: Had I conſulted Fleſh and Blood, or the Dictates of a Revengeful Spirit, I could eaſily have ſecured my own, by taking away his Life; but I had rather venture the utmoſt

1 *Sam.* 24. 4.

Ver. 21. 22.

Effects

Effects of *Saul's* Hatred, than incur the Displeasure of God, my great Deliverer and Defender; the Fear of that could not make me forgo the Fear of him; and therefore, though I could not hinder *Saul's*, yet thro' the Grace of God, restraining me, *I kept my self from mine Iniquity.*

From mine Iniquity, that is, from the Sin, to which I was strongly tempted; for *some* (saith he afterwards to *Saul* himself) *bad me kill thee*; and which I was also prone to fall into, had not the fear of God kept me back; for so the *Chaldee* Paraphrast explains the whole Verse, *I was perfect in his fear, and he was the Saver of my Soul from Sin, and from Iniquity.* 1 *Sam.* 24. 10.

The Words thus Open'd and Explain'd, would afford us many useful Points, both for our Instruction and our Practice; the Chief of which I shall endeavour to speak to, under these Three Heads, which seem to comprise their main Importance:

1. That there is some particular Sin, which every one may call in a more peculiar manner, *His own Iniquity.*

2. That

2. That 'tis poſſible to keep our ſelves from ſuch Sins, as *David* did, by uſing the Means which *David* us'd.

3. What Helps and Directions are needful for this Purpoſe, that ſo we may learn to maintain our Integrity, and keep our ſelves from thoſe Sins, to which we are moſt inclineable.

Firſt, There is ſome particular Sin, to which every one is more prone than to another, of which he may ſay by way of *Emphaſis*, 'tis *mine Iniquity*, at which he may point with his finger, and ſay, *That's it.*

But what that is, as 'tis certainly known to GOD, who *ſearcheth our hearts*, and *ſpyeth out all our ways*; ſo may every Man likewiſe know it himſelf, by *Commuoing with his own heart*, and *conſidering his wayes*: By looking into his own breaſt, and impartially examining his own Conſcience; by laying his Life to the Rule of his Conſcience, and meaſuring his Conſcience by the Rule of God's Law: This is the beſt Examiner and Informer too, a Faithful Witneſs, and

Pſal. 4. 4. *Hag.* 1. 5. 7.

and a moſt Uncorrupt Judge, which will eaſily diſcover and arraign, convict and condemn the Criminal, maugre all Endeavours to bribe or ſtifle the Evidence: This muſt needs find out the Sin, to which it is always privy, and a Mans own heart cannot chooſe but tell him what he loves beſt, and what he is moſt addicted to.

That therefore there is greater Proclivity in every one to ſome peculiar Sins, is ſufficiently evident from every Mans private Conſcience: But how it comes to paſs that ſo it is, beſides the general Corruption of our Natures, which is common to us all, will be further manifeſt from theſe following Conſiderations.

I. We are more inclineable to ſome Sins, than others, through our Natural Tempers and Complexions: For though the firſt Principles whereof we all conſiſt; I mean the Soul and Body, be vaſtly different in their firſt Frame and Make, the one being Heavenly, the other Earthy; yet ſuch is their near Conjunction, while we are in the Body, that they ſtrongly influence one another: *The Corruptible Body preſſeth down the Soul, and the Earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the Mind,* (ſays *Solomon*, Wiſd. 9. 15.): And ſuch is the Predominancy of ſome Elements *Wiſd.* 9.15.

Elements and Humours, to which the Naturaliſt aſcribes the Diverſity of Conſtitutions, that from thence alſo the Moraliſt derives the different Tempers of Mens Minds and Inclinations: Thus the *Sanguine* inclines moſt to Luſt and Wantonneſs, Incontinence and Intemperance; the *Cholerick* to Anger and Paſſion, Pride and Contention; the *Melancholick* to Envy, Diſcontent, Diſtruſt and Deſpair; the *Phlegmatick* to Covetouſneſs and Idleneſs, and Luke-warmneſs in Religion: So that, according to the different Conſtitutions of Mens Bodies, there ariſe different Inclinations in their Souls and Minds; and as it is the proper Buſineſs of Reaſon, to find out and reſtrain, ſo it is the Great Work of Grace and Religion, to ſubdue and mortifie the predominant Paſſion. From whence,

II. We may further obſerve, That at ſome certain Periods of our Lives, we are more inclineable to ſome Sins than others; that every Age of humane Life, has ſome peculiar Darling, that commonly bears the ſway: Thus, in Old Age, Men generally are prone to ſuch as moſt conduce to their Temporal Advantage in the World, to hoard and heap up Riches, when they leaſt need 'em; and when they

they are juſt leaving the World, they are commonly moſt ſolicitous about it; in our Youth to ſuch, as moſt gratifie our ſenſual Appetites, and promote our Pleaſures; letting looſe the Reins to every inordinate Affection, and ruſhing headlong to Sin and Folly: Then we are apt to be covetous, and by conſequence crafty, and deceitful, and unjuſt; and now we are apt to be riotous and diſorderly, impatient of Reproof, and heedleſs of Inſtruction; then ſelf-ended, and now ſelf-willed; then griping, and now profuſe; then carking and caring, as though we dream'd of an Immortality upon Earth; and now taking ſuch Courſes, as help to ſhorten Life, as though we were afraid of living too long: So true is that of the Pſalmiſt, which he backs with a ſtrong Aſſeveration, *Verily every Man living in his beſt Eſtate, is altogether Vanity.* But then, *Pſal.* 39. 5.

III. We are more inclineable to ſome Sins, than others, by reaſon of our Education, or our Company; the former being ſeldom ſo ſtrict and ſevere, but that it gives us opportunity to ſee and hear in others, and permits likewiſe in our ſelves, a great many Follies and evil Cuſtoms, which commonly grow up with us: And the latter ſeldom ſo choice

and pure, (eſpecially in this Licentious Age) but that they have a great many Spots and Blemiſhes, and frequently foul Stains too; as is his Company, ſuch is the Man alſo; *He that toucheth Pitch, ſhall be defiled therewith; and he that hath Fellowſhip with a proud Man, ſhall be like unto him*; ſo great is the Power of Education, and the Influence of Converſe and Example: And yet by theſe things, Mens Minds and Manners are as much, if not more faſhion'd, than by Nature it ſelf: From hence proceeds that great habit of Swearing, ſo common among Children, as well as Men; they learn to blaſpheme the Name of God, before they are taught to call upon it, and that chiefly by hearing others ſwear: For whatever Temptation there is to other Sins, from the Fleſh or the World, there is none in Nature imaginable for this, unleſs it be from the Devil, or from bad Example: And from hence too proceeds that which is grown ſo Notorious and Epidemical of late Years, *viz.* Luxury in Eating, Exceſs in Drinking, Profuſeneſs in Apparel, and ſo great Miſpence of Time and of Eſtates, by immoderate Sports and Gaming: Men do as their Neighbours do, and then think their Numbers will excuſe 'em;

Eccl. 13. 1.

'em; their love to the Company inclines 'em to their Follies, and nothing more common, than to follow a Multitude to do evil.

IV. We are prone to ſome Sins, more than others, through the ſeveral States and Conditions of Life, into which Providence does bring us, or from the different Profeſſions and Courſes of Life we take upon our ſelves: Thus for Inſtance, When we are healthy and ſtrong, we are apt to forget God, and give our ſelves the Swing; and Sickneſs tempts us to be impatient towards Him: Proſperity for the moſt part, makes men proud, and abundance inſolent and wanton; and Adverſity tempts 'em to be envious and querulous, fraudulent and pilfering: No ſooner do we wax fat as *Jeſurun*, but with him too, we kick and ſpurn at the Giver of all good things; and when we are brought low and afflicted, we are ready with *Job*'s fooliſh Wife, to curſe GOD and dye: From the Conſideration of this Danger, in each extream, it was, That *Agur* made that excellent Petition unto God, *Give me neither Poverty nor Riches, but feed me with Food convenient for me; leſt I be full and deny thee, and ſay who is the Lord? Or leſt I be poor, and ſteal, and take the Name of my God in vain*: And

Prov. 30. 8, 9.

thus alſo in the Church it has been obſerv'd, That in perillous Times and Perſecution, ſome have turned Apoſtates from the Faith, and run over to the Enemies Quarters; and through the Peace and Proſperity of the Church, ſome have grown careleſs and ſecure, others envious and quarrelſome at all that is above 'em: The one has frighted Men to ſacrifice to Idols, and comply with any thing to ſave themſelves; the other has enſnar'd 'em to ſerve *Mammon*, Ambition, or their own Bellies, more than the Lord Jeſus. Again, there are more Temptations to ſome Sins, than others, from the different Profeſſions or Courſes of Life, Men take upon themſelves; if they follow the Court, I need not tell you, what Temptations and Snares there are to divers Sins, and what danger there is of falling into'em, unleſs your Vows for Vertue, and a tender Regard to the Honour which cometh of God onely, keep you upright: If they be liſted in the Camp, that tempts them moſt to Rapine and Violence, neglect of God's Worſhip, and Prophaneneſs: If they exerciſe Trading and Merchandiſe, they meet with greater Enticements to Lying and Cozening, Over-reaching and Unjuſt Dealing; and the Myſtery of ſome Trades, as bad Men manage

manage 'em, is a downright Myſtery of Iniquity: If Husbandry, to Anxiety about the things of the World, a Diſtruſt of God's Providence, or murmuring againſt it: Nay, I could wiſh, that in the moſt ſacred Profeſſion of all, there might be an Exception made in this Particular; but St. *Paul* tells us, that even in his days, *Some Preach'd Chriſt out of Envy and Strife*, ſome *for filthy Lucre* onely, as well as *ſome out of Good Will*: And Hiſtory will make it good, that in all the ſucceeding Ages of the Church, ſome through their Eloquence in Preaching, have been betray'd to Pride and Vain-Glory, and through the Conceit of their Parts and Learning, and being cryed up by others, have been the chiefeſt Authors of thoſe Hereſies and Schiſms, that have all along infeſted the Church. From whence,

Phil. 1. 15.

Titus, 1. 11.

V. I may add in the laſt place, That there are ſome particular Sins, to which Men are lyable, through Religion it ſelf: By which I mean, a falſe Opinion, or a ſtrong Perſwaſion, which they call by the Name of Religion, though perhaps it be really no ſuch thing. Thus many Mens Confidence of their own way, is often attended with great Cenſoriouſneſs and Uncharitableneſs towards all that

that differ from 'em, and a ſtrong Preſumption that it will excuſe all other Defects or Miſcarriages in themſelves: 'Tis no new thing we know, for two Perſons or Parties, to be mighty confident, even of both parts of a Contradiction, though at the ſame time we know alſo, that 'tis utterly impoſſible for both to be right: What then ſhall we do? Believe neither; ſo the Atheiſt indeed concludes, who laughs at all Religions alike, and hardens himſelf in his Impiety, becauſe the ſeveral Profeſſors are not agreed about the true: But if we would lay by Prejudice, and judge indifferently in the Caſe, the Wrong may be generally known from the Right, by this eaſie and ſafe Rule; wherever there is leaſt Humility, and leaſt Charity to be ſeen, there to be ſure is leaſt of the True Religion: And if we would ſeriouſly apply our ſelves to the Practiſe of theſe two Chriſtian Graces, the reſt of the Goſpel-Vertues would ſoon attend 'em, and thereby we ſhould make it evident to all Men, that we our ſelves are in the Right.

The time would fail me, ſhould I inſtance in all the Errours and Miſtakes of this nature; but that they are ſtrangely improv'd by

by ſome Opinions more than others, will appear from thoſe of the *Roman* Communion chiefly, who muſt needs by their Principles, be not onely more forward than others, to Un-Chriſtian all the World beſides, but alſo neglect to be true Chriſtians themſelves; their Superſtition about ſmaller things, eating out their Zeal and Care of the weightier Matters, their Doctrines about Mortal and Venial Sins, Confeſſion and Penance, Indulgences, Purgatory, and the like; bolſtering up their Proſelytes in a Carnal Security, and quite undermining and deſtroying the Neceſſity of an Holy Life. And thus we know by a ſad Experience, that there are ſome Principles among 'em, which lead Men to be ſeditious and turbulent, perfidious and inhuman; ſuch as theſe I mean, That Faith is not to be kept with Hereticks, (and every one is ſuch with them, who proteſts againſt their Erroneous or Wicked Tenets) that the End legitimates the Means, That a good Intention juſtifies an evil Action, That 'tis lawful to do whatever will advance, or to deny any thing that may prejudice their *own Cauſe*, (for we ſhould do 'em too much Honour to call it Catholick.) I will not indeed ſay, that all of that Communion will pro-

profeſſedly own, at this time eſpecially, theſe and the like Doctrines, there is ſufficient reaſon why they ſhould not; nor yet will I ſay, that all believe 'em, though then I know not how to call 'em Members of that Church, which hath aſſerted 'em with all the Arguments of their moſt Celebrated Doctors: And if there be any ſuch among 'em, as neither believe nor practiſe 'em, they ſeem to have gain'd one of the hardeſt Conqueſts in the World, even to have kept themſelves from that Iniquity, which the very Principles of their Religion did prompt and perſwade them to.

And thus having ſhewn, how it comes to paſs, That every one is inclin'd to ſome Sin or other, which he may call in a more peculiar manner, *His own Iniquity*, I leave the Particulars to the Search of every Mans private Conſcience, (God knoweth, and your own hearts know which is yours) and ſo proceed to the

2. Prop. *That 'tis poſſible to keep our ſelves from ſuch Sins as* David *did*; who profeſſes here of himſelf in great ſincerity, That he had kept himſelf from that *Iniquity*, to which he was ſtrongly tempted, and which he was prone to fall into.

And

And there is none of us all but may go and do likewiſe, if we be willing to follow his good Example; by cheriſhing the Grace that is freely given us of God, and remembring the Vows we have ſo often made Him; by uſing the Means, and obſerving the Method preſcribed in His Word; by conſulting the Dictates of calm Reaſon, and ſound Religion, and a well informed Conſcience; by conſidering the Conſequence of all ſuch *Darling Sins*, and asking our ſelves that ſober Queſtion, *What we ſhall do in the end thereof?* In a Word, by maintaining, as *David* did, a mean Opinion of our ſelves, an humble Dependance upon God, and by keeping his Judgments and his Fear before us. This will certainly ſecure us, if not from the Temptation, at leaſt from the Compliance, and Commiſſion of the Sin; it may importune us, but it cannot prevail againſt us; it may ſollicite our Conſent, but it cannot gain in upon us, ſo as to lead us Captive at its pleaſure, deliberately to commit it, and habitually to practice it.

But of this I ſhall ſpeak more particularly by and by, and onely mention it here, becauſe I find it ſo common for Men to palliate or excuſe their Sins, either from the ſtrength of the Temptation, or from their own Weakneſs, or from ſome

fatal Impulſe, and what is the genuine Off-ſpring of their own Wills, they generally lay at the door of Neceſſity: 'Alas! What would you 'have 'em to do? 'Tis next to impoſſible to do 'otherwiſe; they inherit ſuch a weak and de- 'prav'd Temper, or they are born under ſuch a 'Malignant Aſpect, or they are caſt, by the De- 'cree of Heaven, into ſuch unhappy Circum- 'ſtances, that they are not Maſters of their owu 'Actions: And how then can ye blame 'em for 'what is not in their Power and Choice to a- 'void? Or, How can that be called their Sin, 'which they are even neceſſitated to commit? Thus, rather than take to themſelves the ſhame of their Sins, Men will belye their own Natures, aſperſe the Majeſty of God, the great Lover of Souls, and caſt a Scandal upon the Efficacy of His Grace and Goſpel: For how (I beſeech you) can Man be more excellent than a Brute, nay than a Stock or a Stone, unleſs he be a Rational and a Free Agent, endued with Underſtanding to diſcern, and a Will to chooſe the Good, and refuſe the Evil? Or, How can it conſiſt with the Juſtice and Goodneſs of God, to leave him under the Power of the moſt uncontroulable Deſtiny, and yet puniſh him ſeverely, for not obeying his Laws? To what Purpoſe are all the Com-

mands and Exhortations, all the Invitations and Expoſtulations, the Promiſes and Threatnings in the Goſpel; nay, To what Purpoſe is our Preaching, and your Hearing, the Word, the Sacraments, and Prayer, which are the Means of Grace; if it be not poſſible by the Uſe of theſe Means, and through the Help of this Grace, to reſiſt Temptations, to reſtrain our inordinate Affections, to weaken and ſubdue, and at laſt to mortifie our Luſts, and ſo to keep our ſelves from that Iniquity, whatever it be, to which we are moſt prone?

Whatever therefore our Corrupt Hearts may pretend (as indeed we are all very favourable to our own Sins) we may eaſily Confute our ſelves, that there is no Impoſſibility, or Neceſſity in the Caſe: For if the very Suſpition of Poiſon in the Cup, will make the Drunkard ſtartle and forbear it; if the Unclean Perſon will refrain from his unlawful Embraces, when he is ſure to incur the Puniſhment of *Zimri* and *Cosbi*; if Men will paſs by their unjuſt Advantages, when their Credit and Repute ſhall be certainly blaſted by 'em; if they will defer an intended Wickedneſs, till they are favour'd with Secrecy, or encourag'd by Impunity; if the Preſence of a Child will awe 'em into good Manners, and

teach 'em ſo much Religion, at leaſt, as to pretend and counterfeit it; with what Face can they ſay, 'tis impoſſible for 'em to ceaſe from Evil, or to change a vitious Cuſtom; and that there is a Neceſſity of yielding to the Temptations, either of the World, the Fleſh, or the Devil, when 'tis plain, they may be all baffled and withſtood, upon leſſer Motives, than either the Grace of the Goſpel, or the Terrors of the Lord, the Apprehenſions of a Future Life, and a Judgment to come affords 'em. Which brings me to the laſt thing I propoſed to ſpeak to.

Third, To ſubjoin ſuch *Helps and Directions as are needful for this Purpoſe, that we may maintain our Integrity, and keep our ſelves from thoſe Sins, to which we are moſt inclineable.*

And here again the Method which Holy *David* made uſe of, gives us the firſt, and the beſt Direction; and that is,

1. By Conſtant and Fervent Prayer, to implore the Divine Aid, and the continual Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, that God would not only keep us from falling into 'em, but even turn our hearts from inclining to 'em, and help us to ſee our Folly, and our Danger: For alas! We are not able of our ſelves, to help our ſelves, not ſo much as to think a good Thought, much leſs

leſs to reſiſt an evil Inclination, or a ſtrong Temptation; *but our Sufficiency is of God*: *It is God* (ſays the Pſalmiſt here) *that giveth me with ſtrength, and maketh my way Perfect*; *and through Chriſt, who ſtrengthens me* (ſays St. *Paul*) *I can do all things*. Without the Divine Grace and Aſſiſtance, it is impoſſible we ſhould be kept from any Sin, and without Prayer, there is no way imaginable of obtaining either: That was the vain Preſumption of the *Pelagian* Heretick, who thought to do it in his own Strength; and this is the too common, but dangerous Miſtake of ſome that would be thought more Orthodox Chriſtians, who think to have help without asking: Hence thoſe manifold Exhortations and Commands in SS. to pray continually, to pray without ceaſing, to watch and pray: *Watch ye therefore, and pray always* (ſays our Saviour); *Continue in Prayer, and watch in the ſame* (ſays St. *Paul*); *Be ye ſober, and watch unto Prayer* (ſays St. *Peter*): And for our Encouragement to pray, we have the greateſt Aſſurance that it ſhall be granted: *Ask, and it ſhall be given you*, ſays our Bleſſed Saviour, which he ſtrongly enforces, from the kindneſs of Earthly Parents; *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good things to your Children, how much more ſhall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit*

Ver. 32. *Phil.* 4. 13. *Luk.* 21. 36. *Col.* 4. 2. 1 *Pet.* 4. 7. *Luk.* 11. 9. *Ver.* 13.

Spirit to them that ask him? And, *If any Man lack*
Jam. 1. 5. *Wiſdom*, ſays St. *James*, *let him ask of God, and it ſhall be given him*: What more poſitive promiſes in the Book of God?

But here, if any one object, as I believe ſome are apt to do; if God be ſo liberal in granting His Grace and Spirit, how comes it then to paſs, that ſo many run into Sin, for want of it, who yet perhaps are frequently asking it? To this I Anſwer, That ſuch, either ask it not in Faith, that is relying on thoſe Ways, and uſing the Means, which God in His Word directs 'em to; or elſe they ask it not in Sincerity, and ſo draw near with their Mouths, while their Hearts are far from deſiring what they ask; as St. *Auguſtine* ſomewhere ſays of himſelf, *That when in his Youthful Heat, he prayed againſt his beloved Sin, he did it ſo coldly, as though he was afraid, leſt God ſhould hear him*: Or elſe they neglect to ſtir up the Grace of God, that is already beſtowed on them, and ceaſe to ſecond it with their own Endeavours. For,

2. We muſt always remember, that tho' the Grace of God prevents us, that we may have a good Will, and works in us, when we have it, that ſo we may find Succeſs, yet in Vain do we expect the Continuance of His Help, without

our

our diligent Endeavours: While He aſſiſts our Weakneſs, He does not intend to encourage our Lazineſs; and therefore we are *alſo to labour, and ſtrive, according to his working, which worketh in us mightily*; as the Apoſtle expreſſes it: 'Tis the Might of His Power that worketh in us, but we are to labour according to it, or elſe we provoke Him to withdraw it from us. And this I obſerve the rather, becauſe there are ſome in the World who think they have nothing to do, but only to ſit (as it were) with folded Arms, under the Influences of Heaven, and wait for their Work to be done to their hands, by the Almighty Power of God, and the ſole Operation of His Grace and Spirit; and though they would gladly be help'd, yet never ſtir a foot to help themſelves: But ſurely a Chriſtian, one that is in Covenant with Chriſt by Baptiſm, and a Member of his Body, ſhould know and conſider better things; and ſuch as accompany his Salvation, *viz.* That though God be always before hand with us, in giving us His Spirit, yet when it is once beſtowed, He expects our Compliance, and humble Concurrence with it, that we ſhould manage His Grace with Careſulneſs, and improve His Talents with Diligence, moſt unfeignedly aſcribing all the Glory to Himſelf, who is the ſole efficient *Col.* 1. 29.

ficient Cauſe of all that is good in us. Wherefore, as we muſt always pray, that God would keep us from ſuch Sins, ſo we muſt labour alſo to keep our ſelves, ſince we have now no Excuſe from Weakneſs, no Pretence for Diſability, having the Promiſe of Divine Aſſiſtance, and of further Supplies of Grace, upon uſing the former well; for *to him that hath ſhall be given*, Mat. 13. 12. and *He giveth more Grace*, Jam. 4. 6. In order to which, I ſhall add;

3. That we take care to avoid ſuch things, and decline ſuch Occaſions, as are moſt likely to ſnare us, and gain upon us, leſt one thing hook in another, and we be caught in the Gin, before we ſuſpect the Danger. The Neglect of this, was the Cauſe of the Firſt Sin, to which we owe our Inclinations to all the reſt; *for* Adam *was not deceiv'd*, ſays the Apoſtle, *but the Woman being deceiv'd, was in the Tranſgreſſion*. The Man was not deceiv'd, till he hearkened to the Woman; nor was the Woman beguil'd, till ſhe liſtned to the Charmer; when once ſhe began to parly with the Tempter, to come near the Tree, and to contemplate and admire the Goodlineſs of the Fruit, ſhe was more than half overcome: The Command & the Threatning of God [*In the day thou eateſt, thou ſhalt dye the Death*] are ſoon overlook'd,

1 Tim. 2. 14.

looked and forgotten; and we preſently read, *That ſhe took of the Fruit of the Tree, and did eat, and gave alſo unto her Husband with her, and he did eat.* Gen. 3. 6. And certainly 'tis a ſhrewd ſign we do not much deſire to keep our ſelves from the Sin, when we court or ſeek out the occaſion; nay, 'tis an Argument rather, that we long to fulfill the Luſts of the Fleſh and of the Mind, when we encourage the Temptation and make proviſion for 'em.

Tertullian tells us of a Chriſtian Woman, who going to ſee the Heathen Sacrifices and Shews, was immediately ſeized on by the Evil Spirit, to whom thoſe Sacrifices were made; and when the Holy Man, in the Name and Power of *Chriſt*, had caſt him out, and demanded the Reaſon, *Why he meddled with one that was a Chriſtian?* he replied, *What did ſhe make there?* He found her within his own Territories, in the midſt of his Votaries and Vaſſals, and ſo he took her for his own. The Application of the Story is briefly this: When we willingly ruſh upon a Temptation, or contentedly cloſe with the occaſion, we give the Tempter the greateſt advantage againſt us; we do (as it were) proffer him our Service; and if God be no kinder to us than we are to our ſelves, to with-hold and reſtrain us by his

Grace, and reſcue us by his mighty Power, he leads us away Captive at his will and pleaſure. Let us then avoid the Occaſion, ſhun the Place, the Company, the Counſel and Converſe of
1 Theſſ. 5. 22. Evil-doers, and *abſtain* (as the Apoſtle adviſes) even *from all appearance of Evil.*

Fourthly, Let no man think either the Evil and Malignity of Sin, or God's Hatred to it, to be leſs than it is; For he that is not truly ſenſible of the Evil of *all Sin*, will ſcarce be afraid of any; and he that does not believe that God really hates it, will never be ſolicitous, leſt he offend him by it. And indeed, theſe are commonly the Grounds of Mens indulging themſelves in Sin; they frame ſpecious and plauſible Arguments to excuſe themſelves, and with fallacious Reaſonings, endeavour to leſſen their Guilt, while they ſometime colour a downright wilful Sin, with the ſpecious Name of an Infirmity, and then, with *Lot*, think their *Zoar* may
Gen. 19. 20. be ſpar'd, becauſe it is but a little one: *Is it not a little one? And my Soul ſhall live.* Or elſe they are willing to compound with the Almighty,
2 Kin. 5. 18. and ready to ſay with *Naaman*, *Only in this thing the Lord pardon thy Servant*; If God would diſpence with 'em in this or that beloved Luſt, He ſhall command 'em in all other things: or elſe they

they presume upon God's Mercy, without sufficient Warrant from his Word; and tho' they will confess themselves to be Sinners (as indeed *there is no man liveth and sinneth not*) yet they are apt to think, that God's Mercy being over all his Works, it will overlook theirs too; and tho' they know that he hates Sin, yet they fondly imagine he will be reconciled to them, though they venture to continue in it: 'Tis true indeed, God will be reconciled to any Sinner, provided that he repent; but 'tis every jot as true, that *except he repent, he shall infallibly perish*: Nay, I doubt not to add, That whoso refuses to forsake his beloved Sin now, in hopes he shall do it hereafter, is, in all probability, nearer perishing than he is repenting. Lest any man therefore should thus perversly argue himself into his own Ruin, let him seriously and sadly consider, that every Sin of it self is of a condemning nature, and that God perfectly hates every evil way. And let no one presume to say, My Sin is inconsiderable, and therefore I need not leave it; It is a far-better Consequence, My Sin is inconsiderable, and therefore I need not keep it: For, even the Smallness of the Sin, may in some cases, enhaunce the Guilt, because the Temptation is less, the Motive of little or no value, and

the Reſiſtance eaſie: And ſurely it argues a ſtrange fondneſs and love of Sin, and a very light eſteem of God and our own Souls, when one poor contemptible Luſt ſhall be able to exclude or over-poiſe him in our Hearts. Settle therefore in your Souls a true Eſtimate of the Baſeneſs of all Sin, and as deep a ſence of God's Hatred to it; not that it may drive you to deſpond, but lead you to a quick and ſpeedy Repentance, and ſo to hope for a Share in his Mercy, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

5. Be tender and cautious of violating your Conſciences, even in the ſmalleſt matter; for he that has once debauch'd his Conſcience even in leſſer Sins, 'tis much to be fear'd he will not ſtick at greater; for one Sin willingly admitted, brings on another, and Sin added to Sin, oft ends in Preſumption, *Hardneſs of Heart, and Contempt of God's Word and Commandment.* Now Conſcience of our Duty towards God, with an habitual and holy fear of offending him, is the beſt Preſervative in the World againſt all ſorts of Temptations; and that Regret of Mind which is natural to Men upon the Commiſſion of Evil, and is ſupernaturally improved by the Grace of Chriſt, and the Influence of his Spirit, if Men do not wilfully ſtifle and ſuppreſs it, is Armour of Proof againſt

againſt the moſt furious Aſſaults of Sin or Satan. Remember the Example of holy *Joſeph*, who put by a ſtrong Temptation in all its charming Addreſſes with this ſingle Queſtion, *How can I do this great Wickedneſs and ſin againſt God?* Confront the boldeſt or the ſlieſt Tempter with the ſame Queſtion; if he cannot ſatisfie thy Conſcience, how thou may'ſt cloſe with him, and yet not ſin againſt God, he will quickly ceaſe his Requeſt: Or if he be ſo impudent, as to trouble thee ſtill, yet while this Thought is warm in thy Heart, ſo long as the Fear and Love of God are uppermoſt in thy Thoughts, thou may'ſt eaſily reſiſt even the Devil himſelf, and all his accurſed Agents: But he that breaks the Force of his Conſcience, and has learnt to ſilence its Whiſpers and Checks in the Commiſſion of lighter and leſſer Evils, it is not to be doubted, but he will e're long be deaf to all its louder Reproofs. So great reaſon have we to be tender of our Conſciences; ſo great is our Security while we keep 'em undefiled through an *awful Fear of God*, a continual ſence of the Divine Preſence and Inſpection, and an humble regard to that great Day of Accounts, when *we muſt all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt.*

Gen. 39. 9.

2 *Cor.* 5. 10.

To

To these may be added some more particular and special Helps, for the same purpose, which I can only mention.

I. That we set apart some Portion of our Time to examine our selves, and to state the Accounts of our Souls; that we sequester our selves a while from the Business and Bustle of the World, and enter into our Closets, even into the inner Closets of our own Hearts, that so we may search out *the Sin which does so easily beset us*, and resolve against those Temptations especially which have formerly foil'd or overcome us.

II. That we be diligent in reading and hearing the Word of *GOD*, and take more especial notice of those Places and Passages in Holy SS. whether Precepts, Examples, Comminations, or Judgments, which more immediately concern our own Case: For the Book of God is a Glass that flatters no man.

III. That we exercise our selves at convenient Seasons, with some piece of godly and prudent Discipline, such as Abstinence and Fasting, which are so often recommended in the SS. that so

ſo by denying our ſelves ſometimes in things that are Lawful, we may learn by degrees, to tame our unruly Appetites and Wills, whenever they are tempted, or inclin'd to Unlawful Objects.

IV. That we thankfully make uſe of the Means, which Chriſt himſelf hath appointed in the Sacrament of his Death, as a proper Remedy againſt our *peculiar Sins*: For this is not only the Spiritual Food of our Souls, but Phyſick alſo, to cure their Diſtempers, and to prevent Relapſes: If it be duely received with unfeigned Contrition and Penitence going before, with ſerious Vows, a lively Faith, and univerſal Charity accompanying it, it cannot fail to convey to us the Power of Chriſt's Death, the Vertue and Efficacy of his *precious Blood*; it will heal the Wounds that have been made in our Spirits, and keep 'em from fretting afterwards, and *Cleanſe us* at laſt, *through the Supply of the Spirit of Chriſt*, (which is never wanting to his own Inſtitutions) from the Spot and the Pollution, from the Power and Dominion, from the Guilt, and from the Puniſhment *of all Sin*. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant to us all, for Jeſus Chriſt his ſake.

1 *Joh.* 1. 7. *Heb.* 9. 14. 1 *Pet.* 1 19. *Rev.* 1. 5.

To

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, Three Perſons and One God, be aſcribed of us and his whole Church, all Honour and Glory, now and evermore.

FINIS.

Imprimatur.